

# Trump's defense of Nazi violence: The mask comes off

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Donald Trump's remarks on Tuesday defending violent Nazi and white supremacist demonstrators have torn the already threadbare mask from the face of American capitalism. The president of the United States stood before the media to give his support to the "very fine people" involved in the rally in Charlottesville this past weekend, while attacking supposedly "violent" left-wing protesters.

The response of the president to the violence in Charlottesville cannot but have the most far-reaching consequences internationally and within the United States. World War II, which established US hegemony over the world capitalist system, was presented as a war against fascism. Every war over the past quarter-century, justified with the rhetoric of "democracy" and "human rights," was supposedly waged to overthrow one or another head of state described as the modern incarnation of Hitler. Now, the supposed leader of the "free world" has revealed his fascist sympathies.

Within the United States, Trump's comments will fuel growing social and political anger. Millions of people already view the state and its institutions with hostility and contempt. While Trump and pro-Nazi advisers such as Stephen Bannon seek to exploit political confusion and alienation to develop an extra-parliamentary far-right movement, there is not yet a mass constituency for fascism. The mobilization of neo-Nazis from across the country to Charlottesville drew only a few hundred people, compared to the hundreds of thousands who turned out to protest Trump's inauguration.

Nevertheless, the events in Charlottesville and the response of the White House must be taken by the working class both in the United States and internationally as a sharp warning. In the absence of a mass independent movement of the working class

against both parties and the entire political establishment, there is a real danger of a growth of fascism in America.

The exposure of the authoritarian outlook not only of Trump, but of the financial oligarchy he personifies, is at the center of the political crisis within the ruling class. A growing list of CEOs announced their resignation from Trump's Strategic and Policy Forum and his Manufacturing Council, prompting the president to disband both panels yesterday afternoon. Leading congressmen, Democratic and Republican, have condemned the president and his remarks. Former presidents George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush, as well as four members of the military's Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued statements opposing racism.

Former CIA Director John Brennan, who helped implement torture programs and NSA spying, called Trump's comments a "national disgrace" that will put "our national security and our collective futures at grave risk."

The actions and statements of these representatives of the ruling class constitute an exercise in hypocrisy and cover-up. As if the fascistic proclivities of Trump were not clearly established! According to many reports, Trump vented his pro-fascist views to his top aides on many occasions. This means they were known throughout Washington and in the media, which sought to conceal them from the public.

An article by Mark Landler posted on the *New York Times* website on Wednesday ("Trump Refuses to Set a Moral Standard, Abandoning a Tradition") lays out the real concerns motivating the ruling class. Landler complains that Trump has "abdicated what presidents from Roosevelt to Reagan have regarded as a cardinal duty of their job: to set a moral course for the nation."

As examples of the "moral standard" set by previous

presidents, Landler cites Reagan's farewell address in 1989, George W. Bush's address to Congress following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and Barack Obama's appeal "to the best in Americans through a heartbreaking succession of police shootings and racially motivated killings." Other presidents had "moral shortcomings," Landler concludes, "but until now no president has rejected the very concept of moral leadership."

According to this conception, all the problems of American society and politics stem from the individual failings of Trump. As the *New York Times* put it succinctly and crudely in its editorial on Wednesday: "The root of the problem is not the personnel; it is the man at the top."

But Trump, for all his disgusting personal traits, is the outcome of a long political evolution. The past half-century has seen a staggering process of political decay and degeneration, overseen by the "moral guardians" cited by the *Times*.

Nixon was brought down by the Watergate scandal, amid revelations of the criminal activities of American imperialism all over the world. Carter launched the US proxy war in Afghanistan that led to the creation of Al Qaeda. Reagan initiated a social counterrevolution while presiding over an illegal and secret war of subversion in Nicaragua run from the basement of the White House. George H. W. Bush invaded Panama and carried out the first invasion of Iraq. Clinton repeatedly bombed Iraq and imposed brutal sanctions that killed thousands of Iraqis. He followed this up with the air war against Serbia. George W. Bush, who came to power through the theft of an election, initiated wars that killed more than a million people and sanctioned torture as an instrument of policy. Obama, the candidate of "hope" and "change," institutionalized drone assassinations and domestic spying, while handing out hundreds of billions of dollars to Wall Street.

The *Times* and the political and media establishment prefer that the criminal policies of the ruling elite be clothed in democratic phrases about human rights and brotherly love.

The election of Trump was a turning point. He is attempting to incite and legitimize the development of a fascist movement that appeals to the growing desperation and alienation of broad sections of the

population. But his defense of Nazi violence reflects not simply the backward and reactionary outlook of one individual. With Trump, all the crimes of the financial aristocracy that runs the United States have erupted onto the surface of political life for all the world to see.

The media presents the statements of CEOs and military and intelligence officials such as Brennan as if they are the political antidote to the virus of Trump. In fact, the ever-greater political influence of the military and intelligence agencies—to which the Democrats have directed their entire appeal since the election of Trump—is another form of the breakup of American democracy. It is one more symptom of the same disease.

The fight against Trump must be developed from below—through a movement of the working class—not through the methods of palace coup.

The working class must intervene with its own socialist and revolutionary program. It cannot allow the fight against the Trump administration to be subordinated to any faction of the ruling class. Opposition to authoritarianism and fascism must be connected to opposition to war, social inequality, unemployment, poverty and the attack on health care and public education. The vast wealth of the financial oligarchy must be seized and the giant banks and corporations that exercise a dictatorship over social and economic life turned into public utilities.

The diseased government of oligarchs and generals, the cockpit of conspiracies to wage war and impose dictatorship, must be replaced by a genuinely democratic workers' government.



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